

DR. JOHNSON'S REJOINDER.

Rev. Egbert W. Smith, D. D.

Before sending to the papers my reply to Dr. Johnson I submitted it to three leading ministers of our Church, with the question, "Does it contain anything that could be considered personally offensive to Dr. Johnson, whom I admire and love?" They assured me it did not. So much for "personal implications."

As to the historic movements under Whitefield and Wesley, under Carey, and Moody, and Booth, my friend seems to think he meets my point by reminding us that in some respects these men and movements were not perfect. Of course not. Is any man or movement perfect? Were there not imperfections in the men and methods of the early Christian Church? Would any man argue that therefore the early Church movement was not led of the Spirit? No reputable Church historian, certainly not Dr. Johnson, doubts that every one of the great movements I cited was born of the Spirit of God. It is equally certain that every one of them was most bitterly opposed by able and consecrated Church leaders, including many in Presbyterian Scotland who violently condemned the Foreign Mission movement.

Such unquestionable historical facts should teach Dr. Johnson and me and all of us just the lessons I pointed out; that even the best of men may be blind to the leadings of Christ's Spirit; that conservatism has its spiritual perils as well as progressiveness; and that with the sharpest scrutiny of new movements there should go a wholesome caution in condemnation.

My friend's second article proves the truth of my criticism of his first. From first to last he confounds Christian work with government, the function of service with the function of rule. The following plain statement is surprising and conclusive:

"Co-ordinating involves governing power. Introduction of new methods is of the essence of government. Organizing is a function of government. The overture asks for governing 'service' then." The fact that these three forms of work mentioned in the overture are to be "done under the supervision of the session, or Presbytery or Synod," does not help matters. It is none the less wrong. "She is still doing work proper to the court. She is doing the court's work. If she do not the work herself, but tell the court what to do and see that it does it, she is really a sort of bishop of bishops, and taking the place in our system, of the next higher court in the series. Dr. Smith does not appear to see this."

No, Dr. Smith certainly does not see it. But having been a pastor for many years, he sees the universal paralysis of Church life that would follow from the amazing principles thus carefully laid down.

For example, several of our classes in the Second Church Sunday school are thoroughly organized, as recommended by the leading Sunday school experts, and have class presidents, secretaries, treasurers and various committees. It is a splendid means of building up the classes, and developing their members along the various lines of Christian work. Let us suppose that Miss Sallie, an intelligent and progressive teacher, wants to organize her class. How shall she go about it? Well, she cannot do it herself, because "organizing is a function of government." Even though she do it "under the supervision of the session, she is still doing work proper to the court; she is doing the court's work." Very well then, since organizing is the court's work, and the court in this instance is the session, and since Miss Sallie is an energetic servant of Christ, off she goes to the session to tell them what she wants done and gets them to do it for her.

But right there Miss Sallie drops her molasses jug, and makes herself an ecclesiastical criminal of the deepest dye. For how runs our quotation: "If she do not do the work herself, but tell the court what to do and see that it does it, she is really a sort of bishop of bishops, and taking the place in our system, of the next higher court in the series."

In that apparently worthy endeavor to do her duty as a teacher, she has magnified herself not only into a bishop of bishops, but into a full-grown Presbytery.

Will some of our readers who are good at puzzles tell Miss Sallie how to secure the organization of her class? She cannot do it herself because it is "the court's proper work." She cannot get the court to do it without usurping both Episcopal and Presbyterian powers.

These astonishing principles paralyze men as well as women workers. Suppose a progressive young Sunday school superintendent wants to co-ordinate the departments of the school, and introduce new and better methods. Since "co-ordinating involves

governing power; and introduction of new methods is of the essence of government," he cannot do it himself even "under supervision of the session." For "this is work proper to the court." It is "doing the court's work." And if he insists on the court's "doing its proper work" of co-ordinating and introducing, straightway he makes himself not only a bishop but a whole Presbytery.

If it be true, as it is not true, that "organization," "co-ordinating," and "the introduction of modern methods" are functions of rule, the proper and exclusive work of church courts, which they cannot delegate to be done by church members acting under their sanction, then the life of the church is hopelessly strangled. This is ecclesiasticism run mad.

Since the functions of the proposed Woman Secretary (or General Organizer, as I should prefer to call her) are not functions of rule but of service, the very same functions of organizing and co-ordinating that are exercised by thousands of women workers all over our Church to day, the argument against the constitutionality of such an appointee falls to the ground.

As to the scriptural warrant, it is surprising that in our brother's two long articles he has never quoted a syllable of Scripture to justify his attack on the Women's Unions. Since they have been doing a most faithful work for nearly twenty years under the emphatic and reiterated approval of all our church courts, surely the burden of proof is on those who oppose them. What scripture statement has he quoted against them? None. Why?

My good friend quotes the following final sentence in my article: "The command 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind,' summons our total mental force to the discovery or devising of the best possible instruments, methods, agencies and modes of organization for the universal establishment of the kingdom of God upon earth."

He then devotes nearly half of a column to distressful surprise that I should advocate "devising" the best possible "modes of organization," when the Bible contains the principles underlying the organization of the Church, and our standards teach the jure divino character of Church government. Therefore "Dr. Smith does not appear to feel the need of a Scriptural warrant, and puts as the rule of the Church the Scriptures plus some what else."

When I read that treatment of my language, like Ezra of old, "I sat down astonished." I did not "pluck off the hair of my head," as he did, for reasons unnecessary to mention.

I used two words, not one. I expressly wrote "discovery or devising" of "the best possible modes of organization." The best possible mode of organization of the Church itself, in its main outlines, we can "discover" in the Bible. So we Presbyterians think, and so I have been taught from childhood. But when it comes to the complete organization of a modern Sunday school, or a Theological Seminary, or a Brotherhood, or a Missionary Society, or a Layman's Missionary Convention, or a Forward Movement, or a Christian College, or a hundred other things that pertain to the kingdom of God, there is need of the most consecrated and prayerful "devising." Ask Dr. W. W. Moore, or Marion Lawrence, or Chas. A. Rowland, or Jno. R. Mott, or Tucker Graham, or any successful pastor in America.

DR. MCPHEETERS' PROTEST.

Rev. Egbert W. Smith.

For reasons that seemed good to me, I have been declining urgent requests to take part this year in the "Elect Infant" discussion. But the protest of my esteemed friend and brother, Dr. W. W. McPheeters, against my "Protest" of last year, makes an added word proper and necessary.

For the "feeling" which Dr. McPheeters deprecates in my Protest, and which is admittedly not directed toward persons but doctrines, I have no apology to make. The dilettante way of handling what we conceive to be religious truth or error, as if they belong to the comparatively trivial realm of taste, I neither admire nor approve. It is the clear teaching of the Bible, richly exemplified in the best age of Calvinism, that religious truth when seen is to be ardently loved, and religious error when seen is to be hated. To contemplate either, without "feeling," is to be guilty of the commonest and deadliest of all heresies, the heresy of the heart.

My way of using Scripture to support my belief in the salvation of infants dying in infancy is the crowning proof, thinks Dr. McPheeters, of "how completely he is under the domination of his feelings." It is a comfort to know that I am not the only emotionalist on this subject. As a simple matter of fact the overwhelming majority of modern Bible students, including such conservatives as Dr.

G. B. Strickler, of Union Seminary, Dr. R. A. Webb, of Louisville Seminary, Dr. R. E. Vinson, of Austin Seminary, hold that we have ample Scripture warrant for believing that the dead infants are saved.

Moreover the Assembly of 1902 took the following action: "We are persuaded that the Holy Scriptures, when fairly interpreted, amply warrant us in believing that 'All infants who die in infancy are included in the election of grace and are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit,' etc. That action has never been rescinded or amended, so that it stands on record as the accepted belief of our Church today.

Neither have I any apology to make for speaking sarcastically of "the doctrine of the doubtfulness of infant salvation." Is this doctrine so precious to any one that his tender feelings are wrung at having it ironically treated? Nay, is this doctrine really believed by any Christian in the whole world today? Does Dr. McPheeters believe that God sends infants dying in infancy to eternal perdition? Certainly not.

My saying that this monstrous doctrine is "simply inconceivable" to me, is to Dr. McPheeters a proof of "the length to which Dr. Smith's unrestrained feelings even made him go." Will it shock my good friend if, with apologies in advance, I appeal from Dr. McPheeters the theologian to Dr. McPheeters the Christian man, and record my deliberate conviction that the doctrine of infant damnation is "inconceivable" not only to me, but to him also, and to every other healthy-minded Christian?

Certainly our Church has for generations been repudiating as a base slander the charge that we believe there are infants in hell. From our pulpits, in private conversation, in ceaseless, age-long, self-defensive controversy with our friends the enemy, we have been declaring and re-declaring, confessing and re-confessing, our faith in the fact of infant salvation. It is only in the Confession that we record our faith in the doubtfulness of infant salvation. Is there not a lie in our right hand?

Dr. McPheeters' carefully drawn distinction between a "credal" belief and some other kind, while clear enough, is yet prone to become, in matters of religious faith, an immoral and Jesuitical distinction.

If our "credal" faith is our honest faith, that infant salvation is doubtful, then let us stop proclaiming from pulpit and controversial stump our Church's belief in it as a fact. If, on the other hand, it is our honest faith that infant salvation is a fact, let us expunge from what we name our Confession of Faith the doctrine of its doubtfulness. This is not a question of distinctions, but of common honesty, with ourselves and the world.

My good friend softly impeaches me with being so carried away with my "feelings" as to "regard it wholly unnecessary to use any special care or pains to determine just what the Scripture words quoted must mean."

Well, busy pastors and secretaries may not have as good opportunities for Bible study as Seminary professors, but some of them do manage once in a while to peep into the Scriptures, and, incredible as it may appear, to even use on rare occasions special care and pains to determine what the Scripture words mean. It is also possible that our more constant contact with all kinds of people may give us a broader knowledge of human nature for which the Bible was written, and a deeper insight into the Bible's meanings.

But my good brother declares that "the impetus of his feelings has not permitted him to stop to glance at the creeds of the great Protestant Churches."

How does he know this? Let me inform my dear brother that the surging floods of emotion that daily toss me from crest to crest of their foaming billows, do occasionally wash me up on a sand-bar or strand me on an island, where, after getting the spray out of my eyes and mouth, I sit down and taking a wet volume out of my pocket snatch a few moments for study before the emotional torrent sweeps me on.

That is how I happen to know that of the great Protestant Confessions, ours is practically the only one containing a paragraph that brands its constituency before the world as believers in possible infant damnation, and has kept them denying and explaining and denying, for over two hundred years.

The wisest man in our Church cannot point out one single particle of good that has ever come to our Church from the possession of that paragraph. It has been a prolific source of nothing except perpetual dissension, misrepresentation and abuse.

Once while sitting on a sandbank drying myself in the sun, I looked into the history of this paragraph with some care, and I became convinced that it had cost our Church in the past not ten but scores of thousands of members. Ask the Texas brethren what it is costing them today.